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# CURRENT LITERATURE.

## BOOK REVIEWS.

### A new school botany.<sup>1</sup>

At least three things must be considered in making an estimate of a text-book, namely, its style, its reliability, and its pedagogical standpoint. Professor Bailey's style is too well known to need description or commendation. He is one of our clearest and most forceful writers. The general facts of botany are fairly well established and are common property, so that the preparation of an elementary text involves merely selection from a great mass of well-known material. In the book before us, therefore, there is no occasion to discuss style or reliability, although in the latter feature Professor Bailey is as great a sinner as the rest of us. In regard to the pedagogical standpoint, however, he has raised a distinct issue and this deserves statement and some discussion. The author has had an extensive experience with teachers and schools, and his verdict is that "the schools and the teachers are not ready for the text-book which presents the subject from the view-point of botanical science." To discover the explanation of this statement by means of his book, it becomes evident that the author does not believe in the organization of botanical material so that some conception of the science as a whole may be developed. From his point of view the study need not develop the idea of relationships, or need not be used to illustrate principles. The selection of material is to be made from forms and phenomena which are familiar, and which are related to the experiences of the daily life. All of this means that in the judgment of the author the average recent botanical text is not adapted to the majority of teachers and of schools as they are, but overshoots them.

At least two objections to this view have doubtless had weight with those botanists who have prepared texts from a different standpoint, namely, the conviction that pupils of secondary-school age are ready for some organization of a science, and the further conviction that teaching can only be improved when some pressure is brought to bear upon teachers to become properly trained. It should be said that the author distinctly disclaims any criticism of existing text-books, but recognizes the need of one adapted to actual rather than to ideal conditions.

An illustration of the result of not keeping hold of some little thread of continuity may be found in Professor Bailey's chapter xxv, entitled

<sup>1</sup> BAILEY, L. H.: Botany, an elementary text for schools. 8vo. pp. xiv+356. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1900. \$1.10.

"Studies in cryptogams." In our judgment this chapter will be unintelligible or misleading to those who have had no other preparation for it than that obtained from the preceding chapters. This is no criticism of the chapter as to its contents, but as to its pedagogical soundness.

Another position taken by the author deserves attention. He says: "There are other ideals than those of mere accuracy. In other words, it is more important that the teacher be a good teacher than a good botanist. One may be so exact that his words mean nothing." The writer sympathizes with the thought in Professor Bailey's mind, for he has encountered these oppressively accurate and insistent teachers, whose mania for precision kills inspiration; but he doubts whether teachers in the secondary schools need any encouragement to be inaccurate. It would seem evident that reasonable accuracy, as opposed to pedantic accuracy, and inspiration should coexist in the teacher. If there is anything for which science stands, and in which it should train even the very young, it is a reasonable accuracy.

The four general subjects presented in the book are the nature of the plant itself; the relation of the plant to its surroundings; histological studies; and determination of the kinds of plants. From the pedagogical standpoint the author regards the third as the least important. The book is full of suggestive material for the teacher, and the illustrations are very attractive. The experiment suggested by Professor Bailey is worth the trial, and no teacher should be so confident of his own methods as not to await the outcome with keen interest.—J. M. C.

#### The Umbelliferae.

JUST TWELVE YEARS after the appearance of their first *Revision* of North American Umbelliferae, Drs. Coulter and Rose have brought out a new monograph of the same group, which appears to be a model of what such work should be.<sup>2</sup>

From the time of Linnaeus to the treatment of our Umbelliferae by Torrey and Gray, eighty-seven years, thirty authors wrote on the group, producing forty-one books and papers, which contained 195 new species or names. In the next forty-seven years, up to the appearance of the *Revision* of Coulter and Rose, twenty-seven writers, in fifty-seven contributions, introduced 258 new names or species in the group. And in the last twelve years nineteen persons, contributing forty-three papers, have added 108 new species and names. The *Monograph* now issued (as it chanced, on the last day of the century) describes and places 332 native species and 39 which are considered as introduced, or a total of 371, in contrast with 233 included in their earlier *Revision*. No comment is needed on this as an indication of the rapidity with which the understood components of our flora are changing.

<sup>2</sup>COULTER, JOHN M., and ROSE, J. N.: Monograph of the North American Umbelliferae. Contr. U. S. National Herbarium 7: 1-256. pls. 1-9. figs. 1-65. 1900.